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ABSTRACT

Described is a six week discussion group for parents of children in special and regular elementary school classes. It is explained that the program goals include stimulating parent involvement with the school and providing alternative methods of dealing with children's behavior. Outlined are group activities for the six meetings, program overview, and an expanded parent class lesson. Described are techniques of reflective listening, methods of changing unacceptable behavior, and 26 "new principles of child raising" (including suggestions to use natural and logical consequences and to eliminate criticism and minimize mistakes). A sample parent questionnaire and parent evaluation form are also provided. (CL)

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TEAM LEARNING CENTER — TITLE VI-B + + + + + CASTRO VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

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PARENT DISCUSSION CLASS

Goals and Expected Outcomes of Parent Class

1. To involve parents of Special Education children with other parents in a discussion class
2. To improve communications between home and school
3. To stimulate interest in parent involvement with the school
4. To develop greater self-awareness in parents and confidence in themselves
5. To help parents listen to individuals in their families more effectively
6. To promote the use of positive reinforcing techniques
7. To help parents be more objective with their children
8. To give alternative methods dealing with children's behavior which concerns the parents

Procedure

Parent groups meet for 1 1/2 hours weekly for six weeks. Parents of children referred to the Team Learning Center are personally invited to participate in a group as well as members of each school community through newsletters, P-T.A. meetings (executive and regular), room mothers' meetings, Kindergarten parent meetings and personal calls by parents of previous classes to insure having an integrated group of parents.

Meetings are held mainly in the morning, although preference by the parents may change the time. Meeting places are Kindergarten rooms that are unused, libraries, unoccupied offices and meeting rooms.

A night class is useful in meeting the needs of working parents. If a baby-sitting service can be provided, more parents will attend regularly.

Topics of the class include:

How to keep track of behavior we want changed
How to improve communications with our children and school
How our own feelings affect others' behavior
How to change our children's behavior that concerns us
How to interpret and understand children's behavior

The format of the class is usually:

Past week's happenings and discussion of charts,
some presentation or participation exercise,
then the sharing of individual concerns of any parent with the group.

The leader acts as a facilitator where parents learn from each other.

OUTLINE OF PARENT DISCUSSION CLASS (For group leader)

First Week

a. Pass out "Overview" and discuss
b. Answer questions at the top of "Parent Questionnaire"
c. Talk about and decide on behavior to observe and count
d. Role play any suggested situation
e. Homework: Bring in data next week

Second Week

a. Ways to weaken behavior - -
   Ignore
   Time out
   If adults get upset - negative behavior may be reinforced
   Be consistent - Don't give in.
b. Ways to strengthen good behavior - -
   Praise - "I like what you are doing." - not "Good boy"
   Give points - then reward
   Use a contingency
   Give child a choice
c. Discuss and chart data on board
d. "Communication stoppers" - write responses (paper)
e. "Reflective listening" (paper)
f. Homework: Practice reflective listening and intervention on the behavior chart

Third Week

a. Discuss homework - charting - reflective listening - reinforcing techniques
b. Discuss paper - "When Reflective Listening Can be Used"
c. Practice reflective listening in pairs
d. Visit Learning Center or classroom with a timing
e. Homework: List questions or concerns to discuss next time and try more reflective listening

Fourth Week

a. Write and collect list of questions to discuss - pass out and have others react to them
b. Practice reflective listening in three's - one acts as an evaluator
c. Evaluation of meetings to date
d. Homework: Behavior projects and reflective listening

Fifth Week

a. Reporting on past week
b. Discuss "How to Change Unacceptable Behavior" (paper) - send "I" messages
c. Refer to behavior instead of "good boy" or "bad boy"

Sixth Week

a. Where do we go from here?
b. Write - "Parent Questionnaire and Evaluation" (paper)
c. How to improve the meetings
d. Discuss paper "New Principles of Child Raising"

EXPANDED PARENT CLASS LESSON

First Week

a. Name Tags.
b. Introductions beginning with leader who talks about his family and experience.
c. Ask for any behaviors of which parents would like to change, actively listen to the situation. Begin talking about what happens before and after the behavior takes place. If it is a behavior that can be observed and counted such as: fighting siblings, talk backs, following directions, jealous remarks, etc., have the parent count the numbers of only one behavior which occurs each day and bring this data to the next week's class. Help each parent if they want to identify an isolated countable behavior. Do not press if they don't volunteer one.
d. Give suggestions for situations which come up that could be helped by specific intervention ideas at the first meeting, such as: dawdling before school (use a timer to teach responsibility); child demanding mother walks to school each morning (shorten distance walked or find a friend to walk with); or any other behavior that doesn't have a different frequency of occurrences.
e. Check out any books to read this week.

Second Week

a. Ask about what the week was like - actively listen to the week's happenings.
b. Ask about the data collected and chart this behavior on a chart. This could be charted on the board to see the chart better.
c. Use the data charted to decide on an intervention program such as: if the negatives reduced by 1/2 for a week, some reward like an ice cream sundae, or a game played with Dad.
d. Ask about the reading materials that members read.
e. Role play three problem situations to which they are to react. Write a one line response on the back of "Communication Stoppers". Discuss responses and talk about how the child's feelings may not have been heard and who owns the problem.
f. Discuss reflective listening and how it can be used. Ask them to practice reflective listening at home.

Third thru VI Weeks

Refer to outline of Parent Discussion Class (for group leader) on previous page.

HOW TO INVOLVE PARENTS

Most people who are interested in parent training have had doubts about how to start groups, how to involve parents, and how to conduct groups.

Some of the ways of involving parents to participate in parent groups are:

1. Invite parents to a group meeting such as "Back-to-School Night" - find the needs of the parents and then plan for a series of group meetings with this input;

2. Plan to have meetings in homes of parents;

3. Plan night meetings;

4. Invite parents to help build - or make needed equipment or materials for the classroom and then follow this up with discussion;

5. Visit homes to explore needs of the parents and interest them in a group meeting;

6. Send out notices to all parents explaining a beginning parent group - find out from teachers which parents had expressed some need for help with their children and then call these particular parents to personally invite them and further explain what the group will be about;

7. Encourage qualified parents who have taken a group class to lead a discussion group themselves.

8. Ask selected graduates of former groups to call parents to describe the group process.

PARENT DISCUSSION CLASS OVERVIEW

1. Introductions

2. Overview of these meetings

   A. We will discuss:

      (1) How to be better listeners and communicators

      (2) How to chart an observable behavior

      (3) How the use of reinforcement changes behavior

      (4) How an awareness of our feelings can improve communications with others

      (5) How to modify behavior by sending "I" messages

   B. Decide on a particular observable behavior which you would like to extinguish in a child and chart the number of times observed each day for one week.

   C. Plan for some intervention with this collected data

   D. Decide on a target behavior to increase by positive reinforcement

   E. Methods used in these meetings:

      (1) Discussions

      (2) Presentations

      (3) Sharing

      (4) Role playing

      (5) Discussions of reading materials

      (6) Positive reinforcement

   F. Evaluation of meetings at the end of six weeks.

   G. Reading materials:

      "Living With Children" by Gerald Patterson
      "Families" by Gerald Patterson
      "Parents are Teachers" by Wesley Becker
      "You Can Help Your Child Improve Study and Homework Behaviors" by Steven Zifferblatt
      "Between Parent and Child" by Haim Ginott
      "Parent Effectiveness" by Thomas Gordon

"COMMUNICATION STOPPERS"

Here is a list of some "communication stoppers" that all of us use frequently.

1. Issuing directions, orders, demands
2. Issuing warnings, threats, or admonitions
3. Appealing to duty or obligation, moralizing, preaching
4. Passing judgment negatively, criticizing, disapproving, blaming
5. Passing judgment positively, evaluating, approving
6. Giving advice, making recommendations, suggesting answers or solutions
7. Trying to persuade through facts, logic, "argument"
8. Questioning, quizzing, "cross-examining", probing
9. Trying to diagnose, "psychoanalyze", or interpret
10. Offering support, reassurance, sympathy
11. Diverting, digressing, shifting, avoiding, by-passing
12. Kidding, joking, teasing, using sarcasm

Many conventional responses are not conducive to further communication. They deny the right of the child to have the feeling. They tend to shut off understanding. The child may well infer, "I am not understood. I shouldn't have such a feeling, but I do." This may generate frustration, guilt, anger, a power struggle with the adult. It may set up a situation which fosters feelings of hate toward self and others.

REFLECTIVE LISTENING

WHAT IS THE CHILD FEELING? How can we let him know that we have heard his feeling - - that we have not denied it?

In REFLECTIVE LISTENING:

1. We hear the feeling

2. Then we reflect what we heard, asking the child to tell us whether or not we have understood him accurately.

EFFECTS OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING

Reflective listening helps build into each of us feelings of self-acceptance and worth, and the power to accept and see worth in others, to resolve conflict, to manifest love instead of hate. To hear feelings and let the sender know he has been heard has enhancing implications:

It is all right for you to have the feelings.

I am not asking you to deny it.

You are a unique resource of perceptions and feelings.

I want to hear how you are feeling and perceiving.

I believe you can learn to handle your feelings in constructive ways.

I think you can learn to be in charge of you.

TIPS TO EFFECTIVE USE OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING

1. Attend to the feeling in the verbal message.

2. Watch for non-verbal clues in the behavior.

3. Reflect the feeling rather than repeat the words of the message.

4. Reflect empathically - rather than objectively.

5. As the person moves on through shades and changes of feeling, pick up the clues and keep with him in your reflections.

6. Understand that some situations cannot be relived, but that you can help by the release of feelings so that the person can free himself of their control over his attention.

WHEN REFLECTIVE LISTENING CAN BE USED

When can reflective listening be used?

1. When the sender owns the problem. He has most of the information and he must act on the solution.

2. When you hear a feeling. We tend to block the expression of feelings. When feelings are heard and accepted, the sender is free to change his feelings. He will not be able to do much towards solving his problem until his feelings have been accepted.

3. When you hear a message sent in complicated code. Example: Teenager asks, "Dad, what do you really think about kids who smoke marijuana?"

4. When there is a conflict between two others.

5. When a person is acting out his feelings. Examples: door-slamming, pacing, forgetting.

Some of the effects of reflective listening on the sender are:

1. He releases feeling.

2. He moves from talking about things and people outside himself to talking about himself and from surface to deep feelings.

3. He begins to take responsibility for solving the problem.

4. He gains insight, greater understanding.

5. He is more willing to listen to the receiver's feelings after he has communicated his own; he feels warmth for the listener.

6. He moves from the initial problem to an underlying problem.

Some effects of reflective listening on the listener are:

1. He has more confidence in the other's ability to solve his own problems and understand himself.

2. He is released from the pressure of having to have an answer for the problem.

3. He is more attentive and gets more information about the other's thoughts and feelings.

4. He feels more loving towards the sender.

Reflective listening communicates:

1. I want to understand what you are feeling from your own point of view; I am not judging, agreeing, or disagreeing.

2. I am accepting you just as you are now; I respect your feelings.

HOW TO CHANGE UNACCEPTABLE BEHAVIOR

One of your second graders is missing. You have had all the children searching the playground and lavatories. You are about to call the parents and the police. Suddenly, you decide to look again in the coat closet. From behind a packing box a voice says, "Boo!"

1. Ordering and commanding: "Jim, get out here this minute!"
2. Admonishing: "You should not scare me so."
3. Warning: "Don't ever do that again."
4. Advising: "If I were you, I wouldn't do that again."
5. Instructing: "This may be furny to you but it certainly isn't funny to me."
6. Criticizing and disagreeing: "This was a very thoughtless stunt."
7. Praising and agreeing: "Well, you certainly fooled us this time."
8. Name calling: "You naughty boy!"
9. Interpreting: "Tricks like this can be very dangerous."
10. Reassuring, sympathizing: "Come on out now. Don't be afraid. I won't hurt you."
11. Probing or questioning: "Why did you hide from me?"
12. Diverting (often by humor): "You don't look like a ghost to me."

When behavior is unacceptable to the adult, there are three basic ways to change behavior of the child:

1. Modifying the child
   a. Explaining - giving good reasons
   b. Demonstration - parent is the model
   c. Requesting - "Please do this."
   d. Alternative - give child a choice
   e. Sending your own feelings when others are bothering you (an "I" message)
2. Modifying the environment
   a. Childproof the home
   b. Enrich the environment
   c. Planning ahead
3. Modifying yourself
   a. Reading books
   b. Recalling your youth (what it was like to be evaluated)
   c. Can you differentiate your values from your parents' values?

Suggested reading: Between Parent and Child, by Dr. Haim Ginott
The Child Under Six, by James Hymes, Jr.

THE NEW PRINCIPLES OF CHILD-RAISING

Excerpts from "Children - The Challenge", by Rudolph Dreikurs

1. Encourage the child.
2. Avoid punishment and reward. "Natural consequence"
3. Use natural and logical consequences.
4. Be firm without dominating.
5. Respect the child.
6. Induce respect for order.
7. Induce respect for the rights of others.
8. Eliminate criticism and minimize mistakes.
9. Maintain routine.
10. Take time for training.
11. Win cooperation.
12. Avoid giving undue attention.
13. Sidestep the struggle for power.
14. Withdraw from the conflict.
15. Act! Keep your mouth shut.
16. Use care in pleasing - have the courage to say "No"
17. Refrain from overprotection.
18. Stimulate independence.
19. Stay out of fights.
20. Make requests reasonable and sparse.
21. Follow through - be consistent.
22. Listen!
23. Watch your tone of voice.
24. Have fun together.
25. Talk with them, not to them.
26. Establish a Family Council.

PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE - FIRST MEETING

1. What would you like to gain from this group?

2. What is going on now that troubles you?

3. After leader asks question No. 3, circle one of the following.

None Some Much

PARENT EVALUATION - FINAL MEETING

In what ways did you accomplish your goals for attending these meetings? Be specific in describing any behavior changes.

	Not at all	Little	Some	Much	Very Much
How much change took place? (Refer to Nos. 1 and 2 above)					
How permanent do you think these changes will be?					
How much have these meetings affected you personally?					
How much have these meetings affected your family?					

Describe in what ways you have changed since these meetings began.

Comment on things you liked most about these meetings.

Comment on the things that could be improved about these meetings.

DL
6/1/73

Parent Questionnaire - First Meeting (cont'd.)

After parents answer questions 1 and 2 on and 1st part of questionnaire, and to avoid getting pre-planned answers to question No. 3, it is not printed on the form - but given orally. Leader asks question No. 3 - -

"How much change is possible in the above answers?"

EVALUATION REPORT GUIDELINES

Data to be collected on Parent Classes:

Total number of groups formed

Total number of parents in the first meetings

Total number of parents in the final meetings

Total number of parents of Special Education children in any meetings

Summary of Parent Evaluation Sheet - Final Meeting

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